

A
N A R R A T I V E
O F T H E
P r i n c i p a l C I R C U M S T A N C E S

R E L A T I V E T O

The Rev. Mr. *W E S L E Y*'s
Late CONFERENCE,

Held in *BRISTOL*, AUGUST the 6th, 1771,

A T W H I C H

The Rev. Mr. *S H I R L E Y*,
And others, his FRIENDS, were present.

W I T H T H E

D E C L A R A T I O N

T H E N A G R E E D T O

By Mr. *WESLEY*, and Fifty-Three of the
PREACHERS in Connexion with him.

In a LETTER to a FRIEND.

By the Rev. Mr. S H I R L E Y. *K*

The T H I R D E D I T I O N.

B A T H:

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To the PUBLIC.

THE following Advertisement has been added by Mr. Wesley, to some of the later Copies of Mr. Fletcher's Letters.

ADVERTISMENT.

The Date of the preceding Letters shews that they were wrote before the late Conference, being design'd to be publickly read at that Time; but not being sent soon enough to the Printer, they were not finish'd till the Conference was ended: It was then doubted, whether it would not be needless to publish them. But it seem'd to be needful still, to remove the ill Impression; which had been made by the Circular Letter, both in England, Scotland, and Ireland; and secondly, to give some Check to the Antinomianism, which is still spreading throughout the three Kingdoms.

It is submitted to the Public whether the above is a sufficient Apology for publishing a bitter personal Invective, after the amicable Conclusion of the Conference, contrary to the express Will and Direction of the Author himself, who was most earnestly solicitous to have it suppressed.— If an Explanation, or even a Vindication of the Minutes was thought expedient, might it not have been done in some other Form in a general Way, avoiding every Thing offensive, or personal?





A

LETTER to a FRIEND.

DEAR SIR,

TO prevent any false Representations of what past on the Objections made by me and others to the doctrinal Points of the Minutes of Mr. *Wesley's* Conference, held in *LONDON*, August the 7th, 1770; a short Narrative of Facts will be the best means to clear up the whole most fully to you, Sir, and to any who may impartially wish for Information; and is particularly due to those Ministers of the GOSPEL, who by Letter or Protest, expressed their united Sentiments with ours, in supposing those Minutes dangerous to the fundamental Truths of Christianity, I shall therefore begin with presenting you with the Extract itself, that gave us the Alarm.

E X T R A C T

From the Minutes of some late Conversations between the Rev. Mr. *Wesley* and others, at a public Conference held in *London*, August the 7th, and printed by *W. Pine*, Bristol.

Take heed to your Doctrine.

We said in 1744, " We have lean'd too much toward Calvinism." Wherein?

1. With regard to Man's Faithfulness. Our Lord himself taught to use the Expression. And we ought never to be ashamed of it. We ought steadily to assert, on his Authority, that if a Man is not faithful in the unrighteous Mammon, God will not give him the true Riches.

2. With Regard to working for Life. This also our Lord has expressly commanded us. Labour ERGAEZESTHE, literally work for the Meat that endureth to everlasting Life. And in Fact every Believer, till he comes to Glory, works for as well as from Life.

3. We have received it as a Maxim, that "a Man is to do nothing, in order to Justification:" Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find Favor with God, should cease from Evil and learn to do well. Whoever repents, should do Works meet for Repentance. And if this is not in Order to find Favor, what does he do them for?

Review the whole Affair.

1. Who of us is now accepted of God?

He that now believes in Christ, with a loving obedient Heart.

2. But who among those that never heard of Christ? He that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness according to the Light he has.

3. Is this the same with, " He that is sincere." Nearly, if not quite.

4. Is not this " Salvation by Works?"

Not by the Merit of Works, but by Works, as a Condition.

5. What have we then been disputing about for these thirty Years? I am afraid about Words.

6. As to Merit itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid: We are rewarded according to our Works, yea because of our Works. How does this differ from for the Sake of our Works? And how

how differs this from secundum merita operum? As our Works deserve? Can you split this Hair? I doubt, I cannot.

7. The grand Objection to one of the preceding Propositions, is drawn from Matter of Fact. God does in Fact justify those, who by their own Confession, neither feared GOD nor wrought Righteousness. Is this an Exception to the general Rule?

It is a Doubt, GOD makes any Exception at all. But how are we sure, that the Person in question never did fear GOD and work Righteousness? His own saying so is not proof: For we know, how all that are convinced of Sin, undervalue themselves in every Respect.

8. Does not talking of a justified or a sanctified State, tend to mislead Men? Almost naturally leading them to trust, in what was done in one Moment? Whereas we are every Hour and every Moment pleasing or displeasing to GOD, according to our Works? According to the whole of our inward Tempers, and our outward Behavior.

These Minutes being communicated to me, LADY HUNTINGDON, and some others my Friends, Persons warmly interested in the Revival of Spiritual Religion, and the Doctrines of the REFORMATION, we apprehended that the Doctrines contained in the Minutes had the most fatal Tendency, and in the strongest and most explicit Terms maintained SALVATION by Works. Had the apparent Error been of a less Magnitude, did it not seem to shake the FOUNDATION itself, we should have been less zealously affected concerning it; nay, had Mr. Wesley and his Connexion been of less Consequence in the religious World, we should have thought ourselves

selves less concern'd to oppose them. But when we consider'd him as standing at the Head of near Thirty-Thousand People, a Veteran in the Cause of the Gospel, one of the Chiefs in the late Reformation that has been carrying on in these Kingdoms for more than Thirty Years, yet deviating so widely from his former Sentiments, Sermons, and other Writings; we deem'd Peace in such a Case, a shameful Indolence; and Silence no less than Treachery. The Extract from the Minutes having been publish'd to the World, being printed in the Gospel Magazine, under the Character of Popery unmask'd, made it further necessary to make a Stand against them: For as the World too frequently confounds all the Friends to vital Christianity under the common Name of *Methodists*, we were solicitous, that no Imputation should lie upon our Names, either in present or future Times, as tacitly consenting to Doctrines which we apprehended were fundamentally erroneous.

We consulted therefore what was to be done; and we thought the best and most candid Way of Procedure was, to go to the Conference, and urge a Retraction of the Minutes in Form, as by far the more desirable Thing; but, if we could not obtain this, we purpos'd, (as our last Resort) to publish our Protest against them. And as the Minutes were the Product not of Mr. *Wesley* singly, but of a whole Conference, there would have been an evident Impropriety in applying to Mr. *Wesley* in particular, and not to the Body at large.

In order to give Weight to our Application, and to show Mr. *Wesley*, and his Preachers, how generaly the Minutes were condemn'd, and to give

give all, who maintained the Gospel of Free Grace, an Opportunity to stand for its Defence, we agreed to address them in a Circular Letter; at the Bottom of which was a Recital of the Extract of the Minutes. And as the Number of Persons to be applied to was great, for Convenience Sake, we got the Circular Letter, &c. printed in a private Pres. But some Days before they were circulated, LADY HUNTINGDON wrote, and inclosed one to the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley with the Reasons which made this Step appear so necessary to us all, and desiring he would forward it to Mr. John Wesley wherever he might be; which he accordingly did. This Circular Letter was drawn up by me, and is as follows:

S I R,

Whereas Mr. Wesley's Conference is to be held at Bristol, on Tuesday the 6th of August next, it is propos'd by Lady Huntingdon, and many other Christian Friends (real Protestants) to have a Meeting at Bristol, at the same Time, of such principal Persons, both Clergy and Laity, who disapprove of the underwritten Minutes; and as the same are thought injurious to the very Fundamental Principles of Christianity, it is further proposed, that they go in a Body to the said Conference and insist upon a formal Recantation of the said Minutes; and in case of a Refusal, that they sign and publish their Protest against them. Your Presence, Sir, on this Occasion is particularly requested: But if it should not suit your Convenience to be there, it is desir'd that you will transmit your Sentiments on the Subject to such Person as you think proper to produce them. It is submitted to you, whether it would not be right, in the Opposition to be made to such a dreadful Heresy, to recommend it to as many of your Christian Friends,

Friends, as well of the Dissenters, as of the established Church, as you can prevail on to be there, the Cause being of so public a Nature. I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

WALTER SHIRLEY.

P. S. Your Answer is desir'd, directed to the Countess of Huntingdon, or the Rev. Mr. Shirley, or John Lloyd, Esq. in Bath; or Mr. James Ireland, Merchant, Bristol; or to Thomas Powis, Esq. at Berwick, near Shrewsbury; or to Richard Hill, Esq. at Hawkstone, near Whitchurch, Shropshire.—Lodgings will be provided.—Enquire at Mr. Ireland's, Bristol.

To this was subjoin'd the Extract from the Minutes which I have already given you.

After the Circulation of this Letter, the Method of proceeding, as well as the Terms in which we had deliver'd ourselves, was objected to by many, as by no Means proper; and on this Conviction, and in Submission to this Precept, “give no Offence to the Jew or Gentile, or to the Church of God:” LADY HUNTINGDON and I wrote the following Letters, which were deliver'd to Mr. Wesley the Evening before the Conference met.

LADY HUNTINGDON to the Rev.
Mr. JOHN WESLEY.

Reverend Sir,

As I find both you and your Friends, as also many of ours, have objected to the Manner or Mode of the Ministers Application to you in Conference, and that it has not had that Appearance of christian Tenderness due upon such an Occasion, but seems rather consider'd as an arbitrary Way of proceeding.—As Christians, and

and those who had no such Meaning; we wish to retract what a more deliberate Consideration might have prevented; as we would as little wish to defend even Truth itself presumptuously, as we would submit servilely to deny it. We intended no personal disrespect to any, but a Degree of Zeal against the Principles establish'd by the Minutes; such Zeal we never wish to be less, and evermore desire it may be with that Firmness which may most fully imply, " contending earnestly for that Faith once deliver'd to the Saints :" But at the same Time altogether under that Influence which dictated the Precept. Permit me to pray for no less a Blessing in your last Moments than that Victory, which Faith in the Lord Jefus Christ alone obtain'd for St. Paul, and which having kept was his only Glory. May this Faith which only purifies the Heart, works Righteousness, obtains Promises, and is the only Anchor of the Soul sure and steadfast, cause you and me while living to fulfil (thro' it's Power) the whole Mind and Will of God concerning us; and in Death, and Eternity, to rejoice alone in the blessed Author and Object of it.—How sacred then does the Preservation of his Honour appear, from whose free Bounty such Mercies only flow. For this alone my Fears are concern'd, and becomes the righteous Cause of my warmest Concurrence in every faithful Testimony bore against those Minutes (given in Conference, August the 7th, 1770) for the Establishment of another Foundation than that which is laid, which is Christ Jefus the Lord; and of Course, repugnant to Scripture, the whole Plan of Man's Salvation under the new Covenant of Grace, and also to the clear Meaning of our establish'd Church to which we belong, as well as to all other Protestant Churches, to whose Foundations (on this Account) our highest Honour and Respect is due.—Independant of that most important Difference,

ference, which from those Minutes does subsist, I desire ever to remain,

Rev. Sir, Your ever

Faithful Friend,

Aug. 2, 1771.

S. HUNTINGDON.

Copy of my Letter to Mr. WESLEY.

" Rev. Sir,

" A Circular Letter, signed by me in Con-
" junction with others, having not been tho-
" roughly understood, and generally censured; I
" thought it necessary to make this Apology, and
" explain what was originally meant in the most
" exceptionable Part of it. What is principally
" objected to is, our *proposing to go in a Body to*
" *the Conference and insist on a formal Recantation of*
" *the Minutes.* It has been said that we had no
" Right to intrude into your Conference. We
" did not pretend to any civil or juridical Right,
" any more than Paul had to call Peter to Ac-
" count; we did not mean to exercise any Au-
" thority over you, or treat you as our inferior,
" but as our equal, and engaged with us in
" the common Cause of the Revival of *Spiritual*
" *Religion.* Neither had we any Thoughts of
" forcing ourselves into your Conference, but
" proposed first to send you a respectful Message
" importing our Design, and withal requesting
" you would appoint what Day and Hour
" would be most suitable to you, and to the
" Members of the Conference to receive us. The
" end we had in view was, to prevent the Ne-
" cessity of publishing our Protest, if haply we
" might prevail on you to give up the fatal Er-
" rors of the Minutes.

" With

" With Respect to those Words, *insist upon a formal Recantation*, the Occasion of them was as follows. It was supposed by some, that instead of giving Satisfaction on the Points in Question, such a forced Construction would be put on the Meaning of the Minutes, as might elude the intended Opposition, and yet leave the Doctrines therein contained entire, unrepealed. Providing therefore against such an Attempt (as it would be an Imposition on our Understandings, where the plain Meaning is so clear;) we were determin'd not to rest satisfied with such an Explanation, or with any Thing that shoud not totally remove the Offence the Minutes have too justly given; and therefore we us'd the Word *insist*, implying thereby that we would be firm and steady to our Point. However, it must be acknowledg'd upon the Whole, that the Circular Letter was too hastily drawn up, and improperly expressed; and therefore, for the *offensive Expressions* in it, we desire we may be hereby understood to make every suitable Submission to you, Sir, and to the Gentlemen of the Conference. And I cannot but wish most earnestly that the Recantation of the Circular Letter may prevail as an Example for the Recantation of the Minutes: But if I should be unhappily disappointed, and that no Satisfaction is intended in this Respect, I shall feel myself bound in Conscience to yield my public Testimony against such Doctrines as these; which appear to me evidently subversive of the *Fundamentals* of Christianity. And here, Sir, I must contend, as for a Rule ever to be laid down, that the *Man* and his *Opinions* are to be kept in a distinct View; and that an " Opposition

" Opposition to the latter, is not to be considered
 " as an Injury to the former; for otherwise,
 " from a Partiality to the Persons of those who
 " have erred, we should be much hindered in
 " that free and open Disquisition of Things, so
 " necessary for the Investigation of Truth, and
 " Detection of Error.

" Wishing you, Sir, an abundant
 " Supply of that Light, Council, and Direction
 " which is freely promised to all who humbly
 " seek it, I remain,

" Reverend Sir,
 " Your faithful Friend, and Servant,
 WALTER SHIRLEY."

In Consequence of these Letters, Mr. *Wesley* sent by the Bearer of them a verbal Message, that Tuesday and Wednesday, the two first Days of the Conference, would be taken up in adjusting Matters of their own; but that if Mr. *Shirley* and his Friends had any Thing to say to him, they might come to the Conference on Thursday the 8th. To say the Truth, I was pleased that the Invitation came from Mr. *Wesley*, without any Application made on our Parts, that there might not be left the least Room for censuring our Proceedings as violent. On that Day therefore, I went thither, accompanied with the Rev. Mr. *Glascot*, the Rev. Mr. *Owen*, (two Ministers officiating in LADY HUNTINGDON's Chapels) *John Lloyd*, Esq. of Bath; Mr. *James Ireland*, Merchant, of Bristol; Mr. *Winter*, and two Students belonging to LADY HUNTINGDON's College.

I shall only give you a brief Detail of what passed, and rather the Substance of what was spoken,

spoken, than the exact Words; omitting likewise many things of no great Weight, or Consequence.

After Mr. *Wesley* had prayed, I desired to know whether Lady *Huntingdon's* Letter and mine to Mr. *Wesley* had been read to the Conference. Being answered in the Negative, I beg'd Leave to read the Copies of them; which was granted. I then said, that I hoped the Submission made was satisfactory to the Gentlemen of the Conference. This was admitted, but then it was urg'd, that as the Offence given by the Circular Letter had been very public, so ought the Letter of Submission. I therefore readily consented to the Publication of it, and have now fulfill'd my Promise. Mr. *Wesley* then stood up; the Purport of his Speech was " a Sketch of his Ministry from his first setting out to the present Time; with a View (as I understood) to prove that he had ever maintain'd Justification by Faith, and that there was nothing in the Minutes contrary thereunto. He complain'd of ill treatment from many Persons, that he apprehended had been under Obligations to him, and said that the present Opposition was not to the Minutes, but to himself personally."—In Answer, I assur'd them in the most solemn Manner, that with respect to myself, my Opposition was not to Mr. *Wesley*, or any particular Person, but to the Doctrines themselves.—And they were pleas'd thus far to give me Credit.—I then proceeded to speak to the Point; inform'd them of the great and general Offence the Minutes had given; that I had numerous Protests and Testimonies against them sent me from Scotland, and from various Parts of these Kingdoms; that it must seem very extraordinary indeed, if so many Men of Sense
and

and Learning should be mistaken, and that there was nothing really offensive in the plain natural Import of the Minutes; that I believ'd they themselves (whatever Meaning they might have intended) would allow that *the more obvious* Meaning was reprehensible; and therefore I recommended to them, nay I beg'd and intreated for the Lord's Sake, that they would go as far as they could with a good Conscience, in giving the World Satisfaction. I said, I hoped they would not take Offence, (for I did not mean to give it) at my proposing to them a Declaration which I had drawn up, wishing that something at least analogous to it, might be agreed to. I then took the Liberty to read it, and Mr. Wesley, after he had made some, (not very material) Alterations in it, readily consented to sign it; in which he was follow'd by Fifty-three of the Preachers in Connexion with him; there being only one or two that were against it.

The DECLARATION.

WHEREAS the doctrinal Points in the Minutes of a Conference held in LONDON, August 7, 1770, have been understood to favour Justification by Works: Now the Rev. John Wesley, and others assembled in Conference, do declare that we had no such Meaning; and that we abhor the Doctrine of Justification by Works as a most perilous and abominable Doctrine; and as the said Minutes are not sufficiently guarded in the Way they are express'd, we hereby solemnly declare in the Sight of God, that we have no Trust or Confidence but in the alone Merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for Justification

fication or Salvation either in Life, Death, or the Day of Judgment; and though no one is a real Christian Believer, (and consequently cannot be saved) who doth not good Works, where there is Time and Opportunity, yet our Works have no Part in meriting, or purchasing our Salvation from first to last, either in whole or in Part.

S I G N E D

John Wesley.	William Pitt.
Jof. Cownley.	Richard Bourke.
J. Hilton.	Jonathan Crombe.
Thomas Rankin.	James Parfett.
John Easton.	Benjamin Rhodes.
Daniel Binsted.	Thomas Hanson.
John Rawson.	John Murray.
Alexander Mather.	Richard Seeds.
Joseph Thomson.	Richard Andrews.
James Dempster.	William Whiteaker.
Thomas Westel.	Edward Slater.
Barnabas Thomas.	John Poole.
Joseph Guilford.	Thomas Potter.
J. Cotty.	Jasper Winscom.
John Furk.	Thomas Twinny.
John Goodwin.	Jeremiah Robertshaw.
James Glazebrook.	Samuel Tooth.
Thomas Taylor.	John Mayor.
John Oliver.	Mathew Mayor.
Samuel Wells.	Richard Caddick.
Jof. Benson.	Christopher Watkin.
James Clough.	Thomas Eden.
Martin Rodda.	Edward Bolton.
John Duncan.	George Hudson.
Francis Walker.	James Hind.
William Barker.	William Winbo.
G. Shadford.	Thomas Brisco.

Thus

Thus was this important Matter settled. But one of the Preachers, (namely Mr. Thomas Oliver) kept us a long Time in Debate; strenuously opposed the Declaration; and to the last would not consent to sign it. He maintained that our *second Justification* (that is at the Day of Judgment) is by Works; and he saw very clearly that for one that holds *that Tenet* solemnly "to declare in the sight of GOD that he has no Trust or Confidence but in the *alone* Merits of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST for Justification or Salvation, either in Life, Death, or the *Day of Judgment*," would be acting neither a consistent, nor an upright Part: For all the Subtilties of metaphysical Distinctions can never reconcile Tenets so diametrically opposite as these. But, blessed be GOD, Mr. Wesley and Fifty-three of his Preachers do not agree with Mr. Oliver in this material Article; for it appears from their subscribing the Declaration, that they do not maintain a *second Justification* by Works.

After the Declaration had been agreed to, it was required of me on my Part, that I would make some public Acknowledgment that I had mistaken the Meaning of the Minutes. Here I hesitated a little; for though I was desirous to do every Thing (consistently with Truth and a good Conscience) for the Establishment of Peace and Christian Fellowship; yet I was very unwilling to give any Thing under my Hand that might seem to countenance the Minutes in their *obvious* Sense. But then, when I was ask'd by one of the Preachers, whether I did not believe Mr. Wesley to be an honest Man, I was distress'd on the other Hand, least by refusing what was desir'd, I should seem to infer a Doubt to Mr. Wesley's

Wesley's Disadvantage. Having Confidence therefore in Mr. *Wesley's Integrity*, who had declared he had no such Meaning, in the Minutes, as was favourable to Justification by Works: and considering that every Man is the best Judge of his own Meaning; and has a Right, so far, to our Credit: and that, though Nothing else *could*, yet the Declaration *did* convince me, they had some other Meaning than what appear'd. I say, (these Things consider'd) I promised them Satisfaction in this Particular; and, a few Days afterwards, sent Mr. *Wesley* the following Message, with which he was very well pleased.

" *Mr. Shirley's Christian Respects*
 " wait on Mr. *Wesley*. The Declaration agreed
 " to, in Conference, Aug. the 8th, 1771, has
 " convinced Mr. *Shirley* he had mistaken the
 " Meaning of the Doctrinal Points in the Mi-
 " nutes of the Conference, held in LONDON,
 " Aug. the 7th, 1770, and he hereby wishes to
 " testify the full Satisfaction he has in the said
 " Declaration, and his hearty Concurrence, and
 " Agreement with the same.

Thus far all was well—The Foundation was secured.—And, with Respect to lesser Matters of Difference, we might well bear with one another; and if either Party should see Occasion to oppose the other's peculiar Opinion, it might be done without Vehemence, and without using any reproachful Terms. The whole was conducted with great Decency on all Sides. We concluded with Prayer, and with the warmest Indications of mutual Peace, and Love. For my own Part, believe me, I was perfectly sincere; and thought this one of the happiest, and most honourable Days of my Life. And yet, Sir, see how soon the

Sword is drawn again! The Rev. Mr. Fletcher of Madely, from his long, and intimate Friendship with Mr. Wesley, thought it necessary to write something in Vindication of the Minutes; which he did, in five Letters, directed to me. In these Letters, he has treated me with a Severity which he has *since* very much regretted; and has wrote to me on the Subject, in such an humble self-abasing Strain, that Delicacy forbids me to present it to the Public. It was not his Intention, however, that the Letters shold be published, if Matters should end peaceably. And therefore I, and my Friends, were much surprised, the Morning after we had been at the Conference, to find that Mr. Wesley persisted in his Resolution to publish the Letters. But, in order to satisfy us in some Degree, he assured us, he had corrected all the *tart* Expressions in them. Alas! Qualia, Verba, quæ facta! Whether there are *no tart* Expressions in the Letters, let every one that hath seen them judge. But, perhaps, this learned Gentleman distinguishes between the *tart* and the *bitter*: If all the *tart* Expressions are corrected, I am sure, there are enough of the *bitter* left.

Some of my Friends, (more solicitous about the Matter than I myself,) repeated their Applications to Mr. Wesley: Mr. I. in particular (a Friend to both) wrote to him, intreating him to wait only till he could hear from Mr. Fletcher, (to whom he had sent a particular Account of the amicable Conclusion of the Conference;) ventur'd to assure him (from what he had already learnt from Mr. Fletcher) that if he were upon the Spot, he would certainly suppress them; and himself offer'd to defray the whole Expence of
the

the Impression. To this Mr. *Wesley* coldly answer'd, " I will consider it," and left Bristol, having first (it seems) confirm'd the Resolution for the Publication.

On Thursday, August the 15th, Mr. I. received a Letter from Mr. *Fletcher*, expressing the Uneasiness of his Mind almost to an Agony, least his Letters should have got into the World.— Some of his Expressions are the following:

" I feel for poor dear Mr. *Shirley*, whom I
" have (considering the present Circumstances)
" treated too severely in my Vindication of the
" Minutes. My dear Sir, what must be done?
" I am ready to defray, by selling to my last
" Shirt, the Expence of the printing of my Vin-
" dication and suppress it." In another Part he
says, " Direct me, dear Sir, consult with him
" and Mr. *Wesley* about the Matter, and do, and
" be persuaded I am ready to do every Thing that
" will be brotherly in this unhappy affair."

On the Receipt of this Letter Mr. I. went to Mr. *Pine* the Printer, and showed it him; and that Evening Mr. *Pine* went to Mr. *Wesley's* preaching house, before the Letters were publickly vend'd; inform'd the Preachers of the particulars of Mr. *Fletcher's* Letter to Mr. I. and earnestly recommended that they might be suppressed. On Friday-Morniug the 16th, Mr. I. sent to the Preachers, and to the Persons concerned in vending the Book, a Copy of Mr. *Fletcher's* Letter to him, and at the same Time one from himself; in which he observes to them, " that Mr. *Fletcher* supposes the Book out, and, even in that Case, wishes it suppressed. He adds his own earnest Intreaties, desiring them only to wait until they had further Au-

thority from the Author, and Mr. *Wesley*; and engages to be accountable to them for every Consequence." Notwithstanding all this, they publish'd the Letters. I shall not descant upon this procedure, being desirous to keep my Place, by forbearing from Invectives; I shall therefore leave it to the Reader to fix what Name he pleases to an Act of this Nature. As to the Letters themselves, there would be a great Impropriety in my giving a full or particular Answer to them; because the Author did all he could to revoke them, and has given me ample Satisfaction in his Letter of Submission. And yet I hope I shall have his Pardon for taking Notice of two particular Charges against me, to be inferr'd from many Passages in the Letters. The one is, that of want of Candor; the other that of Inconsistency.

1. I am suppos'd to want Candor; as if I had put a forc'd construction on the Minutes, in order to bring Mr. *Wesley* in guilty. But that the Sense was not, and indeed need not be wrested with a View to make them speak the Language of Justification by Works, is plain from the Manner in which they struck those into whose Hands they came, who almost universally testified against them in the strongest Terms. Mr. *Fletcher* (it is true) has attempted a Vindication of them, and by breaking them into Sentences and Half-sentences, and refining upon each of these detach'd Particles, he has done more than I could have expected, even from his great Abilities, in giving a new turn to the Whole. But after reading his learned and elaborate Vindication, when I cast my Eye over the Minutes, and consider the whole as it stands in Context. I

must

must own I am just where I was; nothing *but the Declaration* could ever convince me that *Justification by Works* was not maintain'd and supported by the Minutes. I do not desire to make one single Comment upon them; let any impartial Person read them attentively, and I am perswaded he will be affected by them just as I was. I am however more than ever convinc'd of the almost magical Power of metaphysical Distinctions; And I should tremble for their Influence on the Declaration itself, least some bold Metaphysician should affirm that *a second Justification by Works* is quite consistent with what is therein contain'd; but that it is express'd in such strong and absolute Terms, as must for ever put their most exquisite Refinements at Defiance.

That it was not merely from a Want of Candor, that I both saw and represented the Minutes as objeclible in the highest Degree, I may appeal to the Reverend Author of the Vindication himself; for he may be pleased to recollect, that when he first saw them, he expressed to LADY HUNTINGDON his Abhorrence of them: but, afterwards indeed, he saw them in another light, changed his Sentiments, and undertook their Defence. Nay, Mr. Wesley himself, in the Declaration subcribed, has acknowledged that the Minutes *are not sufficiently guarded, in the way they are expreffed.* Can it then be wondered, that I [who am no *Metaphysician*] could never have found out, if the Declaration had not set me right, that such Expressions as these, " We are to work *for* Life.—and *in Order to* Justification.—Salvation is by Works as a *Condition*.—We are rewarded according to our Works, yea *because of* our Works, *for the sake of* our Works, and as our Works

Works deserve," perfectly coincided with Justification by Faith only. I hope therefore that every ingenious Reader will attribute whatever Misconstruction I may seem to have made of the Meaning of the Minutes rather to a Want of metaphysical Knowledge, than to a Want of Candor.

2. The Charge of Inconsistency is supported by Quotations from my Sermons, which, the Reverend Author intimates, seem so perfectly conformable to Mr. Wesley's Sentiments, that my Opposition to the Minutes is the less to be accounted for. To this I beg Leave to observe by Way of Answer, that the Passages quoted are not altogether in Point, neither do they maintain Justification by Works in such direct and express Terms as the Minutes appear to do. I must own however they favor too strongly of Mysticism and Free-Will; and all I can say on my Behalf in this Respect is, that they were wrote many Years ago, at a Time when I had more Zeal than Light; that my present Ministry, as well as my present way of thinking, is very different; that I have frequently express'd my Disapprobation of those Sermons, nay wish'd they had been burnt; and therefore I am oblig'd to my Reverend and learned Friend for this Opportunity he has afforded me of publickly recanting them in the Face of the whole World.

And now Sir, having stated before you and the Public mere Matters of Fact; both I, LADY HUNTINGDON, and those Friends who united with us in the Opposition given to Errors (as we apprehended) of the last Consequence, wish all to judge for themselves as honest Men, as Men of Sense, and as Christians. We make no Comment, either to protect our Conduct, or to place any one

any one Article in a Light which may render it partial to ourselves. Any future controverted Point of *Judgment* can have no Place with us as worthy of our Reply. The Dust of Debate, from the great Fallibility of Man's Understanding, is ever to be avoided. And even Victory on either Side is too mean a Triumph to engage a Christian's Thoughts, much less the Labor of them. Therefore nothing, inferior to an Attack upon the *Foundation* of our Hope, thro' the all-sufficient Sacrifice of JESUS CHRIST could have been, or ever will be an Object sufficient to engage us in it's Defence.

The many Protests, sent by the most able Men, eminent Ministers and Servants of GOD of various Denominations in these Kingdoms, have been prevented from appearing, in Conjunction with ours, upon the Declaration being signed by Mr. Wesley and Conference; and we hope there will never be any future Occasion to produce them. And as Peace and Love is consistently held upon the Foundation of Salvation for Man by FREE GRACE *only*; so we hope nothing has, or can appear to prove that this has not been our *one* Point; and having obtained the Establishment of this *Great and most Essential Truth*; we desire to assure all of our most Christian, and Universal Love; and that to all Denominations who love the LORD JESUS CHRIST in Sincerity. On all *Non-Essentials*, or mere accessory Points, we wish ever to be found gentle towards all Men. And having thus deliver'd our own Souls before the LORD, we consider ourselves as discharg'd both in the Sight of GOD and Man, and no longer answerable for any evil Consequences that may follow,
if any

if any should not abide on this SURE FOUNDATION. We desire to acknowledge Mr. *Wesley's* Labors as worthy of our Love and Respect, while they have been, or ever are, for the LORD's Name Sake alone; as also all those in Conference with him, whose Names are united with his, in signing the Declaration; and take this Method likewise of expressing every respectful Sentiment of Mr. *Fletcher*, desiring in Love to cast a Vail over all apparent Mistakes of his Judgment on this Occasion.

Thus we faithfully and earnestly commit into the Hands of the LORD this Testimony for his own Free Grace; submitting ourselves as his poor unworthy Servants; and hoping it may be for his Glory, and the Preservation of his great and inestimable Truths; and begging that, thro' his infinite Mercy, we may become truly devoted Souls, to the *one* Purpose of his Praise in Time, and the Monuments of our Glorious IMMANUEL's Mercy to all ETERNITY!

I am, Dear Sir,

Your very affectionate Friend,

BATH, and Servant,

Sept. 12, 1771.

WALTER SHIRLEY.

9 Ja. 60

F I N I S.

